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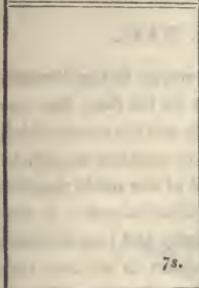
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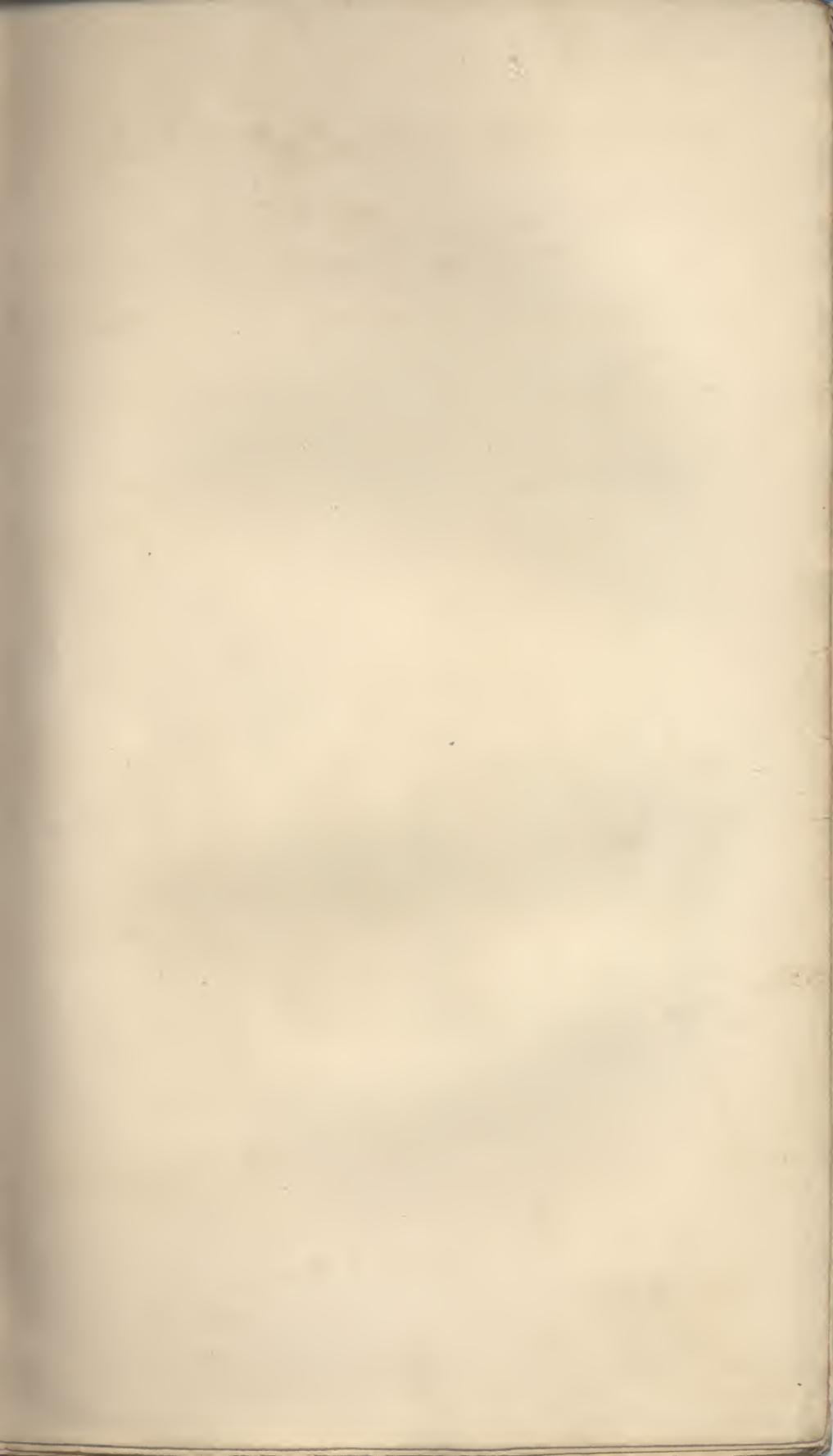
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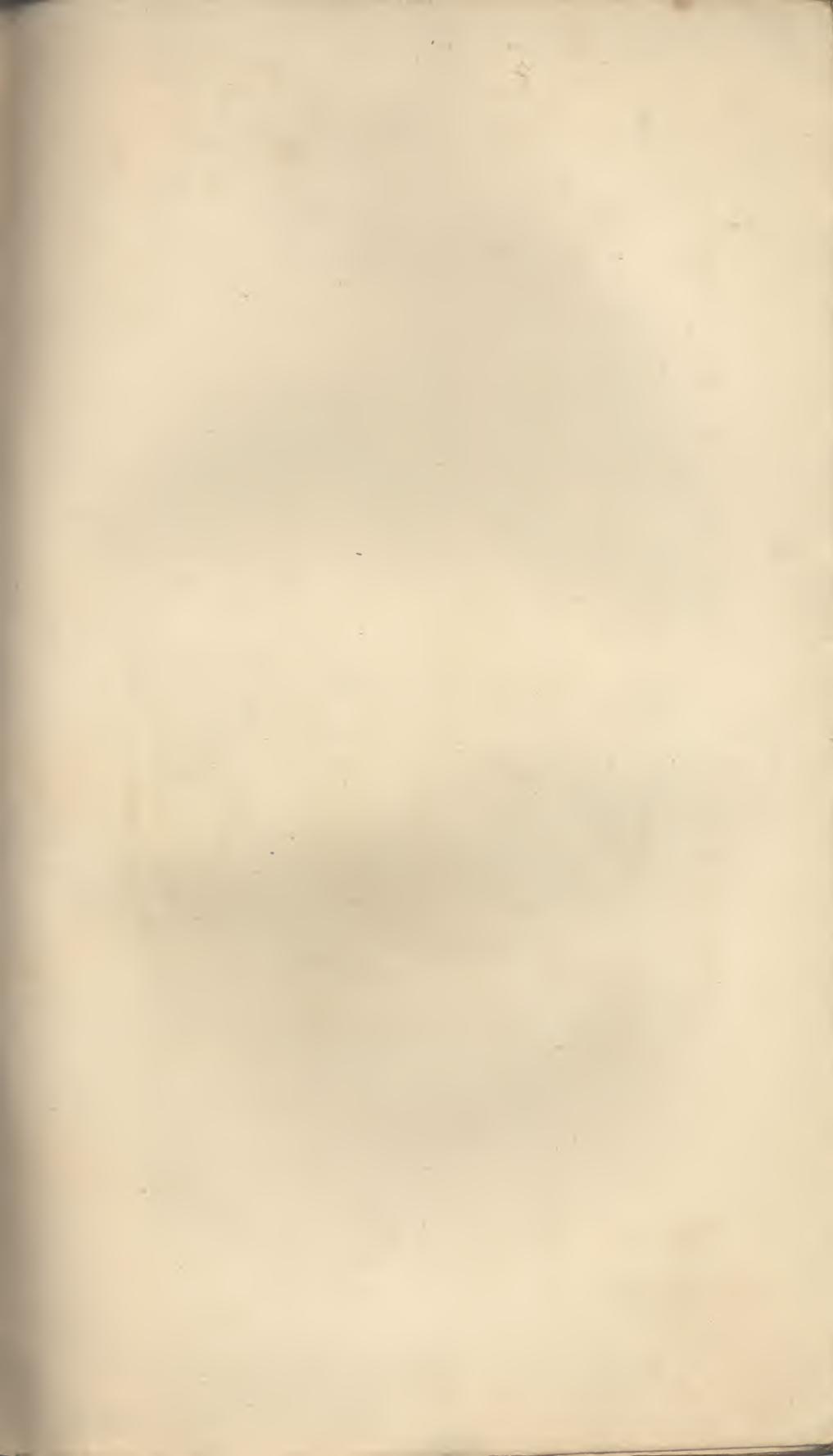
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CHAPTER XXVII.

SHOWING THAT OLD FRIENDS MAY NOT ONLY APPEAR WITH NEW FACES,
BUT IN FALSE COLOURS. THAT PEOPLE ARE PRONE TO BITE; AND
THAT BITERS MAY SOMETIMES BE BITTEN.

MR. BAILEY, Junior—for the sporting character, whilom of general utility at Todgers's, had now regularly set up in life under that name, without troubling himself to obtain from the legislature a direct licence in the form of a Private Bill, which of all kinds and classes of bills is without exception the most unreasonable in its charges—Mr. Bailey, Junior, just tall enough to be seen by an inquiring eye, gazing indolently at society from beneath the apron of his master's cab, drove slowly up and down Pall Mall about the hour of noon, in waiting for his “Governor.” The horse of distinguished family, who had Capricorn for his nephew, and Cauliflower for his brother, showed himself worthy of his high relations by champing at the bit until his chest was white with foam, and rearing like a horse in heraldry; the plated harness and the patent leather glittered in the sun; pedestrians admired; Mr. Bailey was complacent, but unmoved. He seemed to say, “A barrow, good people, a mere barrow; nothing to what we could do, if we chose!” and on he went, squaring his short green arms outside the apron, as if he were hooked on to it by his armpits.

Mr. Bailey had a great opinion of Brother to Cauliflower, and estimated his powers highly. But he never told him so. On the contrary, it was his practice, in driving that animal, to assail him with disrespectful, if not injurious, expressions, as, “Ah! would you!” “Did you think it then?” “Where are you going to now?” “No you won’t, my lad!” and similar fragmentary remarks. These being usually accompanied by a jerk of the rein, or a crack of the whip, led to many trials of strength between them, and to many contentions for the upper hand, terminating, now and then, in china-shops, and other unusual goals, as Mr. Bailey had already hinted to his friend Poll Sweedlepipe.

On the present occasion Mr. Bailey, being in spirits, was more than commonly hard upon his charge; in consequence of which that fiery animal confined himself almost entirely to his hind legs in displaying his paces, and constantly got himself into positions with reference to the cabriolet that very much amazed the passengers in the street. But Mr. Bailey, not at all disturbed, had still a shower of pleasantries to bestow on any one who crossed his path: as calling to a full-grown coalheaver in a wagon, who for a moment blocked the way, “Now, young ‘un, who trusted you with a cart?” inquiring of elderly ladies who wanted to cross, and ran back again, “Why they didn’t go to the workhouse and get an order to be buried;” tempting boys, with friendly words, to get up behind, and immediately afterwards cutting them down: and the like flashes of a cheerful humour, which he would occasionally relieve by going round St. James’s Square at a hand gallop, and coming slowly into Pall Mall by another entry, as if, in the interval, his pace had been a perfect crawl.

It was not until these amusements had been very often repeated, and the apple-stall at the corner had sustained so many miraculous escapes as to appear impregnable, that Mr. Bailey was summoned to the door of a certain house in Pall Mall, and turning short, obeyed the call and jumped out. It was not until he had held the bridle for some minutes longer, every jerk of Cauliflower's brother's head, and every twitch of Cauliflower's brother's nostril, taking him off his legs in the meanwhile, that two persons entered the vehicle, one of whom took the reins and drove rapidly off. Nor was it until Mr. Bailey had run after it some hundreds of yards in vain, that he managed to lift his short leg into the iron step, and finally to get his boots upon the little footboard behind. Then, indeed, he became a sight to see : and—standing now on one foot and now upon the other ; now trying to look round the cab on this side, now on that ; and now endeavouring to peep over the top of it, as it went dashing in among the carts and coaches—was from head to heel Newmarket.

The appearance of Mr. Bailey's governor as he drove along, fully justified that enthusiastic youth's description of him to the wondering Poll. He had a world of jet-black shining hair upon his head, upon his cheeks, upon his chin, upon his upper lip. His clothes, symmetrically made, were of the newest fashion and the costliest kind. Flowers of gold and blue, and green and blushing red, were on his waistcoat ; precious chains and jewels sparkled on his breast ; his fingers, clogged with brilliant rings, were as unwieldy as summer flies but newly rescued from a honey-pot. The daylight mantled in his gleaming hat and boots as in a polished glass. And yet, though changed his name, and changed his outward surface, it was Tigg. Though turned and twisted upside down, and inside out, as great men have been sometimes known to be ; though no longer Montague Tigg, but Tigg Montague ; still it was Tigg : the same Satanic, gallant, military Tigg. The brass was burnished, lacquered, newly-stamped ; yet it was the true Tigg metal notwithstanding.

Beside him sat a smiling gentleman, of less pretensions and of business looks, whom he addressed as David. Surely not the David of the—how shall it be phrased ?—the triumvirate of golden balls ? Not David, tapster at the Lombards' Arms ? Yes. The very man.

"The secretary's salary, David," said Mr. Montague, "the office being now established, is eight hundred pounds per annum, with his house-rent, coals, and candles free. His five-and-twenty shares he holds, of course. Is that enough ?"

David smiled and nodded, and coughed behind a little locked portfolio which he carried ; with an air that proclaimed him to be the secretary in question.

"If that's enough," said Montague, "I will propose it at the Board to-day, in my capacity as chairman."

The secretary smiled again ; laughed, indeed, this time ; and said, rubbing his nose slyly with one end of the portfolio :

"It was a capital thought, wasn't it ?"

"What was a capital thought, David ?" Mr. Montague inquired.

"The Anglo-Bengalee," tittered the secretary.

"The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company, is rather a capital concern, I hope, David," said Montague.

"Capital indeed!" cried the secretary, with another laugh—"in one sense."

"In the only important one," observed the chairman; "which is number one, David."

"What," asked the secretary, bursting into another laugh, "what will be the paid up capital according to the next prospectus?"

"A figure of two, and as many oughts after it as the printer can get into the same line," replied his friend. "Ha, ha!"

At this they both laughed; the secretary so vehemently, that in kicking up his feet, he kicked the apron open, and nearly started Cauliflower's brother into an oyster-shop; not to mention Mr. Bailey's receiving such a sudden swing, that he held on for the moment, quite a young Fame, by one strap and no legs.

"What a chap you are!" exclaimed David admiringly, when this little alarm had subsided.

"Say genius, David, genius."

"Well, upon my soul, you *are* a genius then," said David. "I always knew you had the gift of the gab, of course; but I never believed you were half the man you are. How could I?"

"I rise with circumstances, David. That's a point of genius in itself," said Tigg. "If you were to lose a hundred pound wager to me at this minute, David, and were to pay it (which is most confoundedly improbable), I should rise, in a mental point of view, directly."

It is due to Mr. Tigg to say that he had really risen with his opportunities; and speculating on a grander scale, had become a grander man, altogether.

"Ha, ha," cried the secretary, laying his hand, with growing familiarity, upon the chairman's arm. "When I look at you, and think of your property in Bengal being—ha, ha, ha!—"

The half-expressed idea seemed no less ludicrous to Mr. Tigg than to his friend, for he laughed too, heartily.

"—Being," resumed David, "being amenable—your property in Bengal being amenable—to all claims upon the company: when I look at you and think of that, you might tickle me into fits by waving the feather of a pen at me. Upon my soul you might!"

"It's a devilish fine property," said Tigg Montague, "to be amenable to any claims. The preserve of tigers alone is worth a mint of money David."

David could only reply in the intervals of his laughter, "Oh, what a chap you are!" and so continued to laugh, and hold his sides, and wipe his eyes, for some time, without offering any other observation.

"A capital idea?" said Tigg, returning after a time to his companion's first remark: "no doubt it was a capital idea. It was my idea."

"No, no. It was my idea," said David. "Hang it, let a man have some credit. Didn't I say to you that I'd saved a few pounds?—"

"You said! Didn't I say to you," interposed Tigg, "that *I* had come into a few pounds?"

"Certainly you did," returned David, warmly, "but that's not the idea. Who said, that if we put the money together we could furnish an office, and make a show?"

"And who said," retorted Mr. Tigg, "that, providing we did it on a sufficiently large scale, we could furnish an office and make a show, without any money at all? Be rational, and just, and calm, and tell me whose idea was that."

"Why there," David was obliged to confess, "you had the advantage of me, I admit. But I don't put myself on a level with you. I only want a little credit in the business."

"All the credit you deserve, you have," said Tigg. "The plain work of the company, David—figures, books, circulars, advertisements, pen ink and paper, sealing-wax and wafers—is admirably done by you. You are a first-rate groveller. I don't dispute it. But the ornamental department, David; the inventive and poetical department—"

"Is entirely yours," said his friend. "No question of it. But with such a swell turn-out as this, and all the handsome things you've got about you, and the life you lead, I mean to say it's a precious comfortable department too."

"Does it gain the purpose? Is it Anglo-Bengalee?" asked Tigg.

"Yes," said David.

"Could you undertake it yourself?" demanded Tigg.

"No," said David.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tigg. "Then be contented with your station and your profits, David, my fine fellow, and bless the day that made us acquainted across the counter of our common uncle, for it was a golden day to you."

It will have been already gathered from the conversation of these worthies, that they were embarked in an enterprise of some magnitude, in which they addressed the public in general from the strong position of having everything to gain, and nothing at all to lose; and which, based upon this great principle, was thriving pretty comfortably.

The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company, started into existence one morning, not an Infant Institution, but a Grown-up Company running alone at a great pace, and doing business right and left: with a "branch" in a first floor over a tailor's at the west-end of the town, and main offices in a new street in the city, comprising the upper part of a spacious house, resplendent in stucco and plate-glass, with wire blinds in all the windows, and "Anglo-Bengalee" worked into the pattern of every one of them. On the door-post was painted again in large letters, "Offices of the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company," and on the door was a large brass plate with the same inscription: always kept very bright, as courting inquiry; staring the city out of countenance after office-hours on working days, and all day long on Sundays; and looking bolder than the Bank. Within, the offices were newly plastered, newly painted, newly papered, newly countered, newly floor-clothed, newly tabled, newly chaired, newly fitted-up in every way, with goods that were substantial and expensive, and designed (like the company) to last. Business! Look at the green ledgers with red backs, like strong cricket-balls beaten flat;

the court-guides, directories, day-books, almanacks, letter-boxes, weighing-machines for letters, rows of fire-buckets for dashing out a conflagration in its first spark, and saving the immense wealth in notes and bonds belonging to the company ; look at the iron safes, the clock, the office seal—in its capacious self, security for anything. Solidity ! Look at the massive blocks of marble in the chimney-pieces, and the gorgeous parapet on the top of the house ! Publicity ! Why, Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company, is painted on the very coal-scuttles. It is repeated at every turn until the eyes are dazzled with it, and the head is giddy. It is engraved upon the top of all the letter-paper, and it makes a scroll-work round the seal, and it shines out of the porter's buttons, and it is repeated twenty times in every circular and public notice wherein one David Crimble, Esquire, Secretary and resident Director, takes the liberty of inviting your attention to the accompanying statement of the advantages offered by the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company : and fully proves to you that any connection on your part with that establishment must result in a perpetual Christmas Box and constantly increasing Bonus to yourself, and that nobody can run any risk by the transaction except the office, which, in its great liberality, is pretty sure to lose. And this, David Crimble, Esquire, submits to you (and the odds are heavy you believe him), is the best guarantee that can reasonably be suggested by the Board of Management for its permanence and stability.

This gentleman's name, by the way, had been originally Crimp ; but as the word was susceptible of an awkward construction and might be misrepresented, he had altered it to Crimble.

Lest with all these proofs and confirmations, any man should be suspicious of the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company ; should doubt in tiger, cab, or person, Tigg Montague Esquire (of Pall Mall and Bengal), or any other name in the imaginative List of Directors ; there was a porter on the premises—a wonderful creature, in a vast red waistcoat and a short-tailed pepper-and-salt coat—who carried more conviction to the minds of sceptics than the whole establishment without him. No confidences existed between him and the Directorship ; nobody knew where he had served last ; no character or explanation had been given or required. No questions had been asked on either side. This mysterious being, relying solely on his figure, had applied for the situation, and had been instantly engaged on his own terms. They were high ; but he knew, doubtless, that no man could carry such an extent of waistcoat as himself, and felt the full value of his capacity to such an institution. When he sat upon a seat erected for him in a corner of the office, with his glazed hat hanging on a peg over his head, it was impossible to doubt the respectability of the concern. It went on doubling itself with every square inch of his red waistcoat until, like the problem of the nails in the horse's shoes, the total became enormous. People had been known to apply to effect an insurance on their lives for a thousand pounds, and looking at him, to beg, before the form of proposal was filled up, that it might be made two. And yet he was not a giant. His coat was rather small than otherwise. The whole charm was in his waistcoat.

Respectability, competence, property in Bengal or anywhere else, responsibility to any amount on the part of the company that employed him, were all expressed in that one garment.

Rival offices had endeavoured to lure him away ; Lombard-street itself had beckoned to him ; rich companies had whispered "Be a Beadle !" but he still continued faithful to the Anglo-Bengalee. Whether he was a deep rogue, or a stately simpleton, it was impossible to make out, but he appeared to believe in the Anglo-Bengalee. He was grave with imaginary cares of office ; and having nothing whatever to do, and something less to take care of, would look as if the pressure of his numerous duties, and a sense of the treasure in the company's strong-room, made him a solemn and a thoughtful man.

As the cabriolet drove up to the door, this officer appeared bare-headed on the pavement, crying aloud " Room for the chairman, room for the chairman, if you please !" much to the admiration of the bystanders, who, it is needless to say, had their attention directed to the Anglo-Bengalee Company thenceforth, by that means. Mr. Tigg leaped gracefully out, followed by the Managing Director (who was by this time very distant and respectful), and ascended the stairs, still preceded by the porter : who cried as he went, " By your leave there ! by your leave ! The chairman of the Board, Gentle—MEN ! " In like manner, but in a still more stentorian voice, he ushered the chairman through the public office, where some humble clients were transacting business, into an awful chamber, labelled Board-room : the door of which sanctuary immediately closed, and screened the great capitalist from vulgar eyes.

The boardroom had a Turkey carpet in it, a sideboard, a portrait of Tigg Montague Esquire as chairman ; a very imposing chair of office, garnished with an ivory hammer and a little hand-bell ; and a long table, set out at intervals with sheets of blotting-paper, foolscap, clean pens, and ink-stands. The chairman having taken his seat with great solemnity, the secretary supported him on his right hand, and the porter stood bolt upright behind them, forming a warm background of waistcoat. This was the board : everything else being a light-hearted little fiction.

" Bullamy !" said Mr. Tigg.

" Sir !" replied the Porter.

" Let the Medical Officer know, with my compliments, that I wish to see him."

Bullamy cleared his throat, and hustled out into the office, crying " The Chairman of the Board wishes to see the Medical Officer. By your leave there ! by your leave !" He soon returned with the gentleman in question ; and at both openings of the boardroom door—at his coming in and at his going out—simple clients were seen to stretch their necks and stand upon their toes, thirsting to catch the slightest glimpse of that mysterious chamber.

" Jobling, my dear friend !" said Mr. Tigg, " how are you ? Bullamy, wait outside. Crimble, don't leave us. Jobling, my good fellow, I am glad to see you."

" And how are *you*, Mr. Montague, eh ?" said the Medical Officer, throwing himself luxuriously into an easy chair (they were all easy

chairs in the board-room), and taking a handsome gold snuffbox from the pocket of his black satin waistcoat. "How are you? A little worn with business, eh? If so, rest. A little feverish from wine, humph? If so, water. Nothing at all the matter, and quite comfortable? Then take some lunch. A very wholesome thing at this time of day to strengthen the gastric juices with lunch, Mr. Montague."

The medical officer (he was the same medical officer who had followed poor old Anthony Chuzzlewit to the grave, and who had attended Mrs. Gamp's patient at the Bull) smiled in saying these words; and casually added, as he brushed some grains of snuff from his shirt-frill, "I always take it myself about this time of day, do you know!"

"Bullamy!" said the chairman, ringing the little bell.

"Sir!"

"Lunch."

"Not on my account, I hope?" said the doctor. "You are very good. Thank you. I'm quite ashamed. Ha, ha! if I had been a sharp practitioner, Mr. Montague, I shouldn't have mentioned it without a fee; for you may depend upon it, my dear sir, that if you don't make a point of taking lunch, you'll very soon come under my hands. Allow me to illustrate this. In Mr. Crimble's leg—"

The resident Director gave an involuntary start, for the Doctor, in the heat of his demonstration, caught it up and laid it across his own, as if he were going to take it off, then and there.

"In Mr. Crimble's leg, you'll observe," pursued the Doctor, turning back his cuffs and spanning the limb with both hands, "where Mr. Crimble's knee fits into the socket, here, there is—that is to say, between the bone and the socket—a certain quantity of animal oil."

"What do you pick *my* leg out for?" said Mr. Crimble, looking with something of an anxious expression at his limb. "It's the same with other legs, ain't it?"

"Never you mind, my good sir," returned the Doctor, shaking his head, "whether it is the same with other legs, or not the same."

"But I do mind," said David.

"I take a particular case, Mr. Montague," returned the Doctor, "as illustrating my remark, you observe. In this portion of Mr. Crimble's leg, sir, there is a certain amount of animal oil. In every one of Mr. Crimble's joints, sir, there is more or less of the same deposit. Very good. If Mr. Crimble neglects his meals, or fails to take his proper quantity of rest, that oil wanes, and becomes exhausted. What is the consequence? Mr. Crimble's bones sink down into their sockets, sir, and Mr. Crimble becomes a weazened, puny, stunted, miserable man!"

The Doctor let Mr. Crimble's leg fall suddenly, as if he were already in that agreeable condition: turned down his wristbands again, and looked triumphantly at the chairman.

"We know a few secrets of nature in our profession, sir," said the Doctor. "Of course we do. We study for that; we pass the Hall and the College for that; and we take our station in society *by* that. It's extraordinary how little is known on these subjects generally. Where do you suppose, now?"—the doctor closed one eye, as he leaned back smilingly in his chair, and formed a triangle with his hands, of which

his two thumbs composed the base—"where do you suppose Mr. Crimble's stomach is?"

Mr. Crimble, more agitated than before, clapped his hand immediately below his waistcoat.

"Not at all," cried the Doctor; "not at all. Quite a popular mistake! My good sir, you're altogether deceived."

"I feel it there, when it's out of order; that's all I know," said Crimble.

"You think you do," replied the Doctor; "but science knows better. There was a patient of mine once," touching one of the many mourning rings upon his fingers, and slightly bowing his head, "a gentleman who did me the honour to make a very handsome mention of me in his will—'in testimony,' as he was pleased to say, 'of the unremitting zeal, talent, and attention of my friend and medical attendant, John Jobling, Esquire, M.R.C.S.'—who was so overcome by the idea of having all his life laboured under an erroneous view of the locality of this important organ, that when I assured him, on my professional reputation, he was mistaken, he burst into tears, put out his hand, and said, 'Jobling, God bless you!' Immediately afterwards he became speechless, and was ultimately buried at Brixton."

"By your leave there!" cried Bullamy, without. "By your leave! refreshment for the Board-room!"

"Ha!" said the doctor, jocularly, as he rubbed his hands, and drew his chair nearer to the table. "The true Life Insurance, Mr. Montague. The best Policy in the world, my dear sir. We should be provident, and eat and drink whenever we can. Eh, Mr. Crimble?"

The resident Director acquiesced rather sulkily, as if the gratification of replenishing his stomach had been impaired by the unsettlement of his preconceived opinions in reference to its situation. But the appearance of the porter and under porter with a tray covered with a snow-white cloth, which, being thrown back, displayed a pair of cold roast fowls, flanked by some potted meats and a cool salad, quickly restored his good humour. It was enhanced still further by the arrival of a bottle of excellent madeira, and another of champagne; and he soon attacked the repast with an appetite scarcely inferior to that of the medical officer.

The lunch was handsomely served, with a profusion of rich glass, plate, and china; which seemed to denote that eating and drinking on a showy scale formed no unimportant item in the business of the Anglo-Bengalee Directorship. As it proceeded, the medical officer grew more and more joyous and red-faced, insomuch that every mouthful he ate, and every drop of wine he swallowed, seemed to impart new lustre to his eyes, and to light up new sparks in his nose and forehead.

In certain quarters of the city and its neighbourhood, Mr. Jobling was, as we have already seen in some measure, a very popular character. He had a portentously sagacious chin, and a pompous voice, with a rich huskiness in some of its tones that went directly to the heart, like a ray of light shining through the ruddy medium of choice old burgundy. His neck-kerchief and shirt-frill were ever of the whitest, his clothes of the blackest and sleekest, his gold watch-chain of the heaviest, and his seals of the largest. His boots, which were always of the brightest,

creaked as he walked. Perhaps he could shake his head, rub his hands, or warm himself before a fire, better than any man alive ; and he had a peculiar way of smacking his lips and saying, " Ah ! " at intervals while patients detailed their symptoms, which inspired great confidence. It seemed to express, " I know what you're going to say better than you do ; but go on, go on." As he talked on all occasions whether he had anything to say or not, it was unanimously observed of him that he was " full of anecdote ; " and his experience and profit from it were considered, for the same reason, to be something much too extensive for description. His female patients could never praise him too highly ; and the coldest of his male admirers would always say this for him to their friends, " that whatever Jobling's professional skill might be (and it could not be denied that he had a very high reputation), he was one of the most comfortable fellows you ever saw in your life ! "

Jobling was for many reasons, and not last in the list because his connection lay principally among tradesmen and their families, exactly the sort of person whom the Anglo-Bengalee company wanted for a medical officer. But Jobling was far too knowing to connect himself with the company in any closer ties than as a paid (and well-paid) functionary, or to allow his connection to be misunderstood abroad, if he could help it. Hence he always stated the case to an inquiring patient, after this manner :

" Why, my dear sir, with regard to the Anglo-Bengalee, my information, you see, is limited : very limited. I am the medical officer, in consideration of a certain monthly payment. The labourer is worthy of his hire ; *Bis dat qui cito dat*"—(" classical scholar, Jobling ! " thinks the patient, " Well read man ! ")—" and I receive it regularly. Therefore I am bound, so far as my own knowledge goes, to speak well of the establishment." (" Nothing can be fairer than Jobling's conduct," thinks the patient, who has just paid Jobling's bill himself.) " If you put any question to me, my dear friend," says the doctor, " touching the responsibility or capital of the company, there I am at fault ; for I have no head for figures, and not being a shareholder, am delicate of showing any curiosity whatever on the subject. Delicacy—your amiable lady will agree with me I am sure—should be one of the first characteristics of a medical man." (" Nothing can be finer or more gentlemanly than Jobling's feeling," thinks the patient.) " Very good, my dear sir, so the matter stands. You don't know Mr. Montague ? I 'm sorry for it. A remarkably handsome man, and quite the gentleman in every respect. Property, I am told, in India. House, and everything belonging to him, beautiful. Costly furniture on the most elegant and lavish scale. And pictures, which, even in an anatomical point of view, are per—fection. In case you should ever think of doing anything with the company, I 'll pass you, you may depend upon it. I can conscientiously report you a healthy subject. If I understand any man's constitution, it is yours ; and this little indisposition has done him more good, ma'am," says the doctor, turning to the patient's wife, " than if he had swallowed the contents of half the nonsensical bottles in my surgery. For they are nonsense—to tell the honest truth, one half of them *are* nonsense—compared with such a constitution as his ! "—(" Jobling is the most

friendly creature I ever met with in my life," thinks the patient ; " and upon my word and honour, I 'll consider of it ! ")

" Commission to you, Doctor, on four new policies, and a loan this morning, eh ? " said Crimble looking, when they had finished lunch, over some papers brought in by the porter. " Well done ! "

" Jobling, my dear friend," said Tigg, " long life to you."

" No, no. Nonsense. Upon my word I 've no right to draw the commission," said the doctor, " I haven't really. It 's picking your pocket. I don't recommend anybody here. I only say what I know. My patients ask me what I know, and I tell 'em what I know. Nothing else. Caution is my weak side, that 's the truth ; and always was from a boy. That is," said the doctor, filling his glass, " caution in behalf of other people. Whether I would repose confidence in this company myself, if I had not been paying money elsewhere for many years—that 's quite another question."

He tried to look as if there were no doubt about it ; but feeling that he did it but indifferently, changed the theme, and praised the wine.

" Talking of wine," said the doctor, " reminds me of one of the finest glasses of old light port I ever drank in my life ; and that was at a funeral. You have not seen anything of—of *that* party, Mr. Montague, have you ? " handing him a card.

" He is not buried, I hope ? " said Tigg, as he took it. " The honour of his company is not requested if he is."

" Ha, ha ! " laughed the doctor. " No ; not quite. He was honourably connected with that very occasion though."

" Oh ! " said Tigg, smoothing his moustache, as he cast his eyes upon the name. " I recollect. No. He has not been here."

The words were on his lips, when Bullamy entered, and presented a card to the Medical Officer.

" Talk of the what's his name—" observed the doctor, rising.

" And he's sure to appear, eh ? " said Tigg.

" Why, no, Mr. Montague, no," returned the Doctor. " We will not say that in the present case, for this gentleman is very far from it."

" So much the better," retorted Tigg. " So much the more adaptable to the Anglo-Bengalee. Bullamy, clear the table and take the things out by the other door. Mr. Crimble, business."

" Shall I introduce him ? " asked Jobling.

" I shall be eternally delighted," answered Tigg, kissing his hand and smiling sweetly.

The doctor disappeared into the outer office, and immediately returned with Jonas Chuzzlewit.

" Mr. Montague," said Jobling. " Allow me. My friend Mr. Chuzzlewit. My dear friend—our chairman. Now do you know," he added, checking himself with infinite policy, and looking round with a smile : " that's a very singular instance of the force of example. It really is a very remarkable instance of the force of example. I say *our* chairman. Why do I say *our* chairman ? Because he is not *my* chairman, you know. I have no connection with the company, farther than giving them, for a certain fee and reward, my poor opinion as a

medical man, precisely as I may give it any day to Jack Noakes or Tom Styles. Then why do I say our chairman? Simply because I hear the phrase constantly repeated about me. Such is the involuntary operation of the mental faculty in the imitative biped man. Mr. Crimble, I believe you never take snuff? Injudicious. You should."

Pending these remarks on the part of the doctor, and the lengthened and sonorous pinch with which he followed them up, Jonas took a seat at the board: as ungainly a man as ever he has been within the reader's knowledge. It is too common with all of us, but it is especially in the nature of a mean mind, to be overawed by fine clothes and fine furniture. They had a very decided influence on Jonas.

"Now you two gentlemen have business to discuss, I know," said the doctor, "and your time is precious. So is mine; for several lives are waiting for me in the next room, and I have a round of visits to make after—after I have taken 'em. Having had the happiness to introduce you to each other, I may go about my business. Good bye. But allow me, Mr. Montague, before I go, to say this of my friend who sits beside you: That gentleman has done more, sir," rapping his snuff-box solemnly, "to reconcile me to human nature, than any man alive or dead. Good bye!"

With these words Jobling bolted abruptly out of the room, and proceeded, in his own official department, to impress the lives in waiting with a sense of his keen conscientiousness in the discharge of his duty, and the great difficulty of getting into the Anglo-Bengalee; by feeling their pulses, looking at their tongues, listening at their ribs, poking them in the chest, and so forth; though, if he didn't well know beforehand that whatever kind of lives they were, the Anglo-Bengalee would accept them readily, he was far from being the Jobling that his friends considered 'him; and was not the original Jobling, but a spurious imitation.

Mr. Crimble also departed on the business of the morning; and Jonas Chuzzlewit and Tigg were left alone.

"I learn from our friend," said Tigg, drawing his chair towards Jonas with a winning ease of manner, "that you have been thinking—"

"Oh! Ecod then he'd no right to say so," cried Jonas, interrupting. "I didn't tell *him* my thoughts. If he took it into his head that I was coming here for such or such a purpose, why, that's his look-out. I don't stand committed by that."

Jonas said this offensively enough; for over and above the habitual distrust of his character, it was in his nature to seek to revenge himself on the fine clothes and the fine furniture, in exact proportion as he had been unable to withstand their influence.

"If I come here to ask a question or two, and get a document or two to consider of, I don't bind myself to anything. Let's understand that, you know," said Jonas.

"My dear fellow!" cried Tigg, clapping him on the shoulder, "I applaud your frankness. If men like you and I speak openly at first, all possible misunderstanding is avoided. Why should I disguise what you know so well, but what the crowd never dream of? We companies are all birds of prey: mere birds of prey. The only question is,

whether in serving our own turn, we can serve yours too ; whether in double-lining our own nest, we can put a single lining into yours. Oh, you're in our secret. You're behind the scenes. We'll make a merit of dealing plainly with you, when we know we can't help it."

It was remarked, on the first introduction of Mr. Jonas into these pages, that there is a simplicity of cunning, no less than a simplicity of innocence, and that in all matters involving a faith in knavery, he was the most credulous of men. If Mr. Tigg had preferred any claim to high and honourable dealing, Jonas would have suspected him though he had been a very model of probity ; but when he gave utterance to Jonas's own thoughts of everything and everybody, Jonas began to feel that he was a pleasant fellow, and one to be talked to freely.

He changed his position in his chair ; not for a less awkward, but for a more boastful attitude ; and smiling in his miserable conceit, rejoined :

" You an't a bad man of business, Mr. Montague. You know how to set about it, I *will* say."

" Tut, tut," said Tigg, nodding confidentially, and showing his white teeth : " we are not children, Mr. Chuzzlewit ; we are grown men, I hope."

Jonas assented, and said after a short silence, first spreading out his legs, and sticking one arm akimbo to show how perfectly at home he was,

" The truth is—"

" Don't say, the truth," interposed Tigg, with another grin. " It's so like humbug."

Greatly charmed by this, Jonas began again.

" The long and the short of it, is—"

" Better," muttered Tigg. " Much better !"

" —That I didn't consider myself very well used by one or two of the old companies in some negotiations I have had with 'em—once had, I mean. They started objections they had no right to start, and put questions they had no right to put, and carried things much too high for my taste."

As he made these observations he cast down his eyes, and looked curiously at the carpet. Mr. Tigg looked curiously at him.

He made so long a pause, that Tigg came to the rescue, and said, in his pleasantest manner :

" Take a glass of wine ?"

" No, no," returned Jonas, with a cunning shake of the head ; " none of that, thankee. No wine over business. All very well for you, but it wouldn't do for me."

" What an old hand you are, Mr. Chuzzlewit !" said Tigg, leaning back in his chair, and leering at him through his half-shut eyes.

Jonas shook his head again, as much as to say, " You're right there ;" and then resumed, jocosely :

" Not such an old hand, either, but that I've been and got married. That's rather green, you'll say. Perhaps it is, especially as she's young. But one never knows what may happen to these women, so I'm thinking of insuring her life. It is but fair, you know, that a man should secure some consolation in case of meeting with such a loss."

"If anything *can* console him under such heart-breaking circumstances," murmured Tigg, with his eyes shut up as before.

"Exactly," returned Jonas; "if anything can. Now, supposing I did it here, I should do it cheap, I know, and easy, without bothering her about it; which I'd much rather not do, for it's just in a woman's way to take it into her head, if you talk to her about such things, that she's going to die directly."

"So it is," cried Tigg, kissing his hand in honour of the sex. "You're quite right. Sweet, silly, fluttering little simpletons!"

"Well," said Jonas, "on that account, you know, and because offence has been given me in other quarters, I wouldn't mind patronising this Company. But I want to know what sort of security there is for the Company's going on. That's the—"

"Not the truth?" cried Tigg, holding up his jewelled hand. "Don't use that Sunday School expression, please!"

"The long and the short of it," said Jonas. "The long and the short of it is, what's the security?"

"The paid-up capital, my dear sir," said Tigg, referring to some papers on the table, "is, at this present moment—"

"Oh! I understand all about paid-up capitals, you know," said Jonas.

"You do?" cried Tigg, stopping short.

"I should hope so."

He turned the papers down again, and moving nearer to him, said in his ear:

"I know you do. I know you do. Look at me!"

It was not much in Jonas's way to look straight at anybody; but thus requested, he made shift to take a tolerable survey of the chairman's features. The chairman fell back a little, to give him the better opportunity.

"You know me?" he inquired, elevating his eyebrows. "You recollect? You've seen me before?"

"Why, I thought I remembered your face when I first came in," said Jonas, gazing at it; "but I couldn't call to mind where I had seen it. No. I don't remember, even now. Was it in the street?"

"Was it in Pecksniff's parlour?" said Tigg.

"In Pecksniff's parlour!" echoed Jonas, fetching a long breath. "You don't mean when—"

"Yes," cried Tigg, "when there was a very charming and delightful little family party, at which yourself and your respected father assisted."

"Well, never mind *him*," said Jonas. "He's dead, and there's no help for it."

"Dead, is he!" cried Tigg. "Venerable old gentleman, is he dead! You're very like him."

Jonas received this compliment with anything but a good grace: perhaps because of his own private sentiments in reference to the personal appearance of his deceased parent; perhaps because he was not best pleased to find that Montague and Tigg were one. That gentleman perceived it, and tapping him familiarly on the sleeve, beckoned him to the window. From this moment, Mr. Montague's jocularity and flow of spirits, were remarkable.

"Do you find me at all changed since that time?" he asked. "Speak plainly."

Jonas looked hard at his waistcoat and jewels ; and said, "Rather ecod !"

"Was I at all seedy in those days ?" asked Montague.

"Precious seedy," said Jonas.

Mr. Montague pointed down into the street, where Bailey and the cab were in attendance.

"Neat: perhaps dashing. Do you know whose it is ?"

"No."

"Mine. Do you like this room ?"

"It must have cost a lot of money," said Jonas.

"You're right. Mine too. Why don't you"—he whispered this, and nudged him in the side with his elbow—"why don't you take premiums, instead of paying 'em. That's what a man like you should do. Join us !"

Jonas stared at him in amazement.

"Is that a crowded street ?" asked Montague, calling his attention to the multitude without.

"Very," said Jonas, only glancing at it, and immediately afterwards looking at him again.

"There are printed calculations," said his companion, "which will tell you pretty nearly how many people will pass up and down that thoroughfare in the course of a day. I can tell you how many of 'em will come in here, merely because they find this office here; knowing no more about it than they do of the Pyramids. Ha, ha ! Join us. You shall come in cheap."

Jonas looked at him harder and harder.

"I can tell you," said Tigg in his ear, "how many of 'em will buy annuities, effect insurances, bring us their money in a hundred shapes and ways, force it upon us, trust us as if we were the Mint; yet know no more about us than you do of that crossing-sweeper at the corner. Not so much. Ha, ha !"

Jonas gradually broke into a smile.

"Yah !" said Montague, giving him a pleasant thrust in the breast ; "you're too deep for us, you dog, or I wouldn't have told you. Dine with me to-morrow, in Pall Mall !"

"I will," said Jonas.

"Done !" cried Montague. "Wait a bit. Take these papers with you, and look 'em over. See," he said, snatching some printed forms from the table. "B is a little tradesman, clerk, parson, artist, author ; any common thing you like."

"Yes," said Jonas, looking greedily over his shoulder. "Well !"

"B wants a loan. Say fifty or a hundred pound ; perhaps more ; no matter. B proposes self and two securities. B is accepted. Two securities give a bond. B insures his own life for double the amount, and brings two friends' lives also—just to patronise the office. Ha, ha, ha ! Is that a good notion ?"

"Ecod, that's a capital notion !" cried Jonas. "But does he really do it ?"

"Do it!" repeated the chairman. "B's hard-up, my good fellow, and will do anything. Don't you see? It's my idea."

"It does you honour. I'm blest if it don't," said Jonas.

"I think it does," replied the chairman, "and I'm proud to hear you say so. B pays the highest lawful interest—"

"That ain't much," interrupted Jonas.

"Right! quite right!" retorted Tigg. "And hard it is upon the part of the law that it should be so confoundedly down upon us unfortunate victims; when it takes such amazing good interest for itself from all its clients. But charity begins at home, and justice begins next door. Well! The law being hard upon us, we're not exactly soft upon B; for besides charging B the regular interest, we get B's premium, and B's friends' premiums, and we charge B for the bond, and, whether we accept him or not, we charge B for "inquiries" (we keep a man, at a pound a week, to make 'em), and we charge B a trifl for the secretary; and, in short, my good fellow, we stick it into B up hill and down dale, and make a devilish comfortable little property out of him. Ha, ha, ha! I drive B, in point of fact," said Tigg, pointing to the cabriolet, "and a thorough-bred horse he is. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jonas enjoyed this joke very much indeed. It was quite in his peculiar vein of humour.

"Then," said Tigg Montague, "we grant annuities on the very lowest and most advantageous terms, known in the money market; and the old ladies and gentlemen down in the country, buy 'em. Ha, ha, ha! And we pay 'em too—perhaps. Ha, ha, ha!"

"But there's responsibility in that," said Jonas, looking doubtful.

"I take it all myself," said Tigg Montague. "Here I am, responsible for everything. The only responsible person in the establishment! Ha, ha, ha! Then there are the Life Insurances without loans: the common policies. Very profitable, very comfortable. Money down, you know; repeated every year; capital fun!"

"But when they begin to fall in" observed Jonas. "It's all very well, while the office is young, but when the policies begin to die—that's what I am thinking of."

"At the first start, my dear fellow," said Montague, "to show you how correct your judgment is, we had a couple of unlucky deaths that brought us down to a grand piano."

"Brought you down where?" cried Jonas.

"I give you my sacred word of honour," said Tigg Montague, "that I raised money on every other individual piece of property, and was left alone in the world with a grand piano. And it was an upright-grand too, so that I couldn't even sit upon it. But my dear fellow we got over it. We granted a great many new policies that week (liberal allowance to solicitors, by the bye), and got over it in no time. Whenever they should chance to fall in heavily, as you very justly observe they may, one of these days; then—" he finished the sentence in so low a whisper, that only one disconnected word was audible, and that imperfectly. But it sounded like "Bolt."

"Why, you're as bold as brass!" said Jonas, in the utmost admiration.

"A man can well afford to be as bold as brass, my good fellow, when

he gets gold in exchange!" cried the Chairman, with a laugh that shook him from head to foot. "You'll dine with me to-morrow?"

"At what time?" asked Jonas.

"Seven. Here's my card. Take the documents. I see you'll join us!"

"I don't know about that," said Jonas. "There's a good deal to be looked into first."

"You shall look," said Montague, slapping him on the back, "into anything and everything you please. But you'll join us, I am convinced. You were made for it. Bullamy!"

Obedient to the summons and the little bell, the waistcoat appeared. Being charged to show Jonas out, it went before; and the voice within it cried, as usual, "By your leave there, by your leave! Gentleman from the board-room, by your leave!"

Mr. Montague being left alone, pondered for some moments, and then said, raising his voice,

"Is Nadgett in the office there?"

"Here he is, sir." And he promptly entered: shutting the board-room door after him, as carefully as if he were about to plot a murder.

He was the man at a pound a week who made the inquiries. It was no virtue or merit in Nadgett that he transacted all his Anglo-Bengalee business secretly and in the closest confidence; for he was born to be a secret. He was a short, dried-up, withered, old man, who seemed to have secreted his very blood; for nobody would have given him credit for the possession of six ounces of it in his whole body. How he lived was a secret; where he lived was a secret; and even what he was, was a secret. In his musty old pocket-book he carried contradictory cards, in some of which he called himself a coal-merchant, in others a wine-merchant, in others a commission-agent, in others a collector, in others an accountant: as if he really didn't know the secret himself. He was always keeping appointments in the city, and the other man never seemed to come. He would sit on 'Change for hours, looking at everybody who walked in and out, and would do the like at Garraway's, and in other business coffee-rooms, in some of which he would be occasionally seen drying a very damp pocket-handkerchief before the fire, and still looking over his shoulder for the man who never appeared. He was mildewed, threadbare, shabby; always had flue upon his legs and back; and kept his linen so secret by buttoning up and wrapping over, that he might have had none—perhaps he hadn't. He carried one stained beaver glove, which he dangled before him by the forefinger as he walked or sat; but even its fellow was a secret. Some people said he had been a bankrupt, others that he had gone an infant into an ancient Chancery suit which was still depending, but it was all a secret. He carried bits of sealing-wax and a hieroglyphical old copper seal in his pocket, and often secretly indited letters in corner boxes of the trysting-places before mentioned; but they never appeared to go to anybody, for he would put them into a secret place in his coat, and deliver them to himself weeks afterwards, very much to his own surprise, quite yellow. He was that sort of man that if he had died worth a million of money, or had died worth twopence halfpenny, everybody would have been

perfectly satisfied, and would have said it was just as they expected. And yet he belonged to a class ; a race peculiar to the city ; who are secrets as profound to one another, as they are to the rest of mankind.

"Mr. Nadgett," said Montague, copying Jonas Chuzzlewit's address upon a piece of paper, from the card which was still lying on the table, "any information about this name, I shall be glad to have myself. Don't you mind what it is. Any you can scrape together, bring me. Bring it *to me*, Mr. Nadgett."

Nadgett put on his spectacles, and read the name attentively ; then looked at the chairman over his glasses, and bowed ; then took them off, and put them in their case ; and then put the case in his pocket. When he had done so, he looked, without his spectacles, at the paper as it lay before him, and at the same time produced his pocket-book from somewhere about the middle of his spine. Large as it was, it was very full of documents, but he found a place for this one ; and having clasped it carefully, passed it by a kind of solemn legerdemain into the same region as before.

He withdrew with another bow and without a word ; opening the door no wider than was sufficient for his passage out ; and shutting it as carefully as before. The chairman of the board employed the rest of the morning in affixing his sign-manual of gracious acceptance to various new proposals of annuity-purchase and insurance. The Company was looking-up, for they flowed in gaily.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. MONTAGUE AT HOME. AND MR. JONAS CHUZZLEWIT AT HOME.

THERE were many powerful reasons for Jonas Chuzzlewit being strongly prepossessed in favour of the scheme which its great originator had so boldly laid open to him ; but three among them stood prominently forward. Firstly, there was money to be made by it. Secondly, the money had the peculiar charm of being sagaciously obtained at other people's cost. Thirdly, it involved much outward show of homage and distinction : a board being an awful institution in its own sphere, and a director a mighty man. "To make a swingeing profit, have a lot of chaps to order about, and get into regular good society by one and the same means, and them so easy to one's hand, ain't such a bad look-out," thought Jonas. The latter considerations were only second to his avarice ; for, conscious that there was nothing in his person, conduct, character, or accomplishments, to command respect, he was greedy of power, and was, in his heart, as much a tyrant as any laurelled conqueror on record.

But he determined to proceed with cunning and caution, and to be very keen in his observation of the gentility of Mr. Montague's private establishment. For it no more occurred to this shallow knave that Montague wanted him to be so, or he wouldn't have invited him while his decision was yet in abeyance, than the possibility of that genius being able to overreach him in any way, pierced through his self-conceit

by the inlet of a needle's point. He had said, in the outset, that Jonas was too sharp for him ; and Jonas, who would have been sharp enough to believe him in nothing else, though he had solemnly sworn it, believed him in that instantly.

It was with a faltering hand, and yet with an imbecile attempt at a swagger, that he knocked at his new friend's door in Pall Mall when the appointed hour arrived. Mr. Bailey quickly answered to the summons. He was not proud, and was kindly disposed to take notice of Jonas ; but Jonas had forgotten him.

“Mr. Montague at home ?”

“I should hope he was at home, and waiting dinner, too,” said Bailey, with the ease of an old acquaintance. “Will you take your hat up along with you, or leave it here ?”

Mr. Jonas preferred leaving it there.

“The hold name, I suppose ?” said Bailey, with a grin.

Mr. Jonas stared at him, in mute indignation.

“What, don't you remember hold Mother Todgers's ?” said Mr. Bailey, with his favourite action of the knees and boots. “Don't you remember my taking your name up to the young ladies, when you come a courting there ? A reg'lar scaly old shop, warn't it ? Times is changed, ain't they ? I say, how you've growed !”

Without pausing for any acknowledgment of this compliment, he ushered the visitor up stairs ; and having announced him, retired with a private wink.

The lower story of the house was occupied by a wealthy tradesman, but Mr. Montague had all the upper portion, and splendid lodging it was. The room in which he received Jonas was a spacious and elegant apartment, furnished with extreme magnificence : decorated with pictures, copies from the antique in alabaster and marble, china vases, lofty mirrors, crimson hangings of the richest silk, gilded carvings, luxurious couches, glistening cabinets inlaid with precious woods : costly toys of every sort in negligent abundance. The only guests besides Jonas were the Doctor, the resident Director, and two other gentlemen, whom Montague presented in due form.

“My dear friend, I am delighted to see you. Jobling you know, I believe ?”

“I think so,” said the Doctor pleasantly, as he stepped out of the circle to shake hands. “I trust I have that honour. I hope so. My dear sir, I see you well. Quite well ? That's well !”

“Mr. Wolf,” said Montague, as soon as the Doctor would allow him to introduce the two others, “Mr. Chuzzlewit. Mr. Pip, Mr. Chuzzlewit.”

Both gentlemen were exceedingly happy to have the honour of making Mr. Chuzzlewit's acquaintance. The Doctor drew Jonas a little apart, and whispered behind his hand :

“Men of the world, my dear sir—men of the world. Hem ! Mr. Wolf—literary character—you needn't mention it—remarkably clever weekly paper—oh, remarkably clever ! Mr. Pip—theatrical man—capital man to know—oh, capital man !”

“Well !” said Wolf, folding his arms and resuming a conversation

which the arrival of Jonas had interrupted. "And what did Lord Nobley say to that?"

"Why," returned Pip, with an oath, "he didn't know what to say. Damme, sir, if he wasn't as mute as a poker. But you know what a good fellow Nobley is!"

"The best fellow in the world!" cried Wolf. "It was only last week that Nobley said to me, 'By Gad, Wolf, I've got a living to bestow, and if you had but been brought up at the University, strike me blind if I wouldn't have made a parson of you!'"

"Just like him," said Pip with another oath. "And he'd have done it!"

"Not a doubt of it," said Wolf. "But you were going to tell us"—

"Oh, yes!" cried Pip. "To be sure. So I was. At first he was dumb—sewn up, dead, sir—but after a minute he said to the Duke, 'Here's Pip. Ask Pip. Pip's our mutual friend. Ask Pip. He knows.' 'Damme!' said the Duke, 'I appeal to Pip then. Come Pip. Bandy or not bandy? Speak out!' 'Bandy, your Grace, by the Lord Harry!' said I. 'Ha, ha!' laughed the Duke. 'To be sure she is. Bravo Pip. Well said Pip. I wish I may die if you're not a trump, Pip. Pop me down among your fashionable visitors whenever I'm in town, Pip.' And so I do, to this day."

The conclusion of this story gave immense satisfaction, which was in no degree lessened by the announcement of dinner. Jonas repaired to the dining-room, along with his distinguished host, and took his seat at the board between that individual and his friend the Doctor. The rest fell into their places like men who were well accustomed to the house; and dinner was done full justice to, by all parties.

It was as good a one as money (or credit, no matter which) could produce. The dishes, wines, and fruits were of the choicest kind. Everything was elegantly served. The plate was gorgeous. Mr. Jonas was in the midst of a calculation of the value of this item alone, when his host disturbed him.

"A glass of wine?"

"Oh!" said Jonas, who had had several glasses already. "As much of that, as you like! It's too good to refuse."

"Well said, Mr. Chuzzlewit!" cried Wolf.

"Tom Gag, upon my soul!" said Pip.

"Positively, you know, that's—ha, ha, ha!" observed the Doctor, laying down his knife and fork for one instant, and then going to work again, pell-mell—"that's epigrammatic; quite!"

"You're tolerably comfortable, I hope?" said Tigg, apart to Jonas.

"Oh! You needn't trouble your head about *me*," he replied. "Famous!"

"I thought it best not to have a party," said Tigg. "You feel that?"

"Why, what do you call this?" retorted Jonas. "You don't mean to say you do this every day, do you?"

"My dear fellow," said Montague, shrugging his shoulders, "every day of my life, when I dine at home. This is my common style. It was of no use having anything uncommon for you. You'd have seen

through it. ‘You’ll have a party?’ said Crimble. ‘No, I won’t,’ I said; ‘he shall take us in the rough!’”

“And pretty smooth too, ecod!” said Jonas, glancing round the table. “This don’t cost a trifle.”

“Why, to be candid with you, it does not,” returned the other. “But I like this sort of thing. It’s the way I spend my money.”

Jonas thrust his tongue into his cheek, and said, “Was it?”

“When you join us, you won’t get rid of your share of the profits in the same way?” said Tigg.

“Quite different,” retorted Jonas.

“Well, and you’re right,” said Tigg, with friendly candour. “You needn’t. It’s not necessary. One of a Company must do it to hold the connexion together; but, as I take a pleasure in it, that’s my department. You don’t mind dining expensively at another man’s expense, I hope?”

“Not a bit,” said Jonas.

“Then I hope you’ll often dine with me?”

“Ah!” said Jonas, “I don’t mind. On the contrary.”

“And I’ll never attempt to talk business to you over wine, I take my oath,” said Tigg. “Oh deep, deep, deep of you this morning! I must tell ‘em that. They’re the very men to enjoy it. Pip, my good fellow, I’ve a splendid little trait to tell you of my friend Chuzzlewit, who is the deepest dog I know: I give you my sacred word of honour he is the deepest dog I know, Pip!”

Pip swore a frightful oath that he was sure of it already; and the anecdote, being told, was received with loud applause, as an incontestible proof of Mr. Jonas’s greatness. Pip, in a natural spirit of emulation, then related some instances of his own depth; and Wolf, not to be left behind-hand, recited the leading points of one or two vastly humorous articles he was then preparing. These lucubrations, being of what he called “a warm complexion,” were highly approved; and all the company agreed that they were full of point.

“Men of the world, my dear sir,” Jobling whispered to Jonas; “thorough men of the world! To a professional person like myself, it’s quite refreshing to come into this kind of society. It’s not only agreeable—and nothing *can* be more agreeable—but it’s philosophically improving. It’s character, my dear sir; character!”

It is so pleasant to find real merit appreciated, whatever its particular walk in life may be, that the general harmony of the company was doubtless much promoted by their knowing that the two men of the world were held in great esteem by the upper classes of society, and by the gallant defenders of their country in the army and navy, but particularly the former. The least of their stories had a colonel in it; lords were as plentiful as oaths; and even the Blood Royal ran in the muddy channel of their personal recollections.

“Mr. Chuzzlewit didn’t know him, I’m afraid,” said Wolf, in reference to a certain personage of illustrious descent, who had previously figured in a reminiscence.

“No,” said Tigg. “But we must bring him into contact with this sort of fellows.”

“He was very fond of literature,” observed Wolf.

"Was he?" said Tigg.

"Oh, yes; he took my paper regularly for many years. Do you know he said some good things now and then? He asked a certain Viscount, who's a friend of mine—Pip knows him—'What's the editor's name, what's the editor's name?' 'Wolf.' 'Wolf, eh? Sharp biter, Wolf. We must keep the wolf from the door, as the proverb says.' It was very well. And being complimentary, I printed it."

"But the Viscount's the boy!" cried Pip, who invented a new oath for the introduction of everything he said. "The Viscount's the boy! He came into our place one night to take Her home; rather slued, but not much; and said, 'Where's Pip? I want to see Pip. Produce Pip!—' What's the row, my lord?—' Shakspeare's an infernal humbug, Pip! What's the good of Shakspeare, Pip? I never read him. What the devil is it all about, Pip? There's a lot of feet in Shakspeare's verse, but there an't any legs worth mentioning in Shakspeare's plays, are there, Pip? Juliet, Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, and all the rest of 'em, whatever their names are, might as well have no legs at all, for anything the audience know about it, Pip. Why, in that respect they're all Miss Biffins to the audience, Pip. I'll tell you what it is. What the people call dramatic poetry is a collection of sermons. Do I go to the theatre to be lectured? No, Pip. If I wanted that, I'd go to church. What's the legitimate object of the drama, Pip? Human nature. What are legs? Human nature. Then let us have plenty of leg pieces, Pip, and I'll stand by you, my buck!" And I am proud to say," added Pip, "that he *did* stand by me, handsomely."

The conversation now becoming general, Mr. Jonas's opinion was requested on this subject; and as it was in full accordance with the sentiments of Mr. Pip, that gentleman was extremely gratified. Indeed, both himself and Wolf had so much in common with Jonas, that they became very amicable; and between their increasing friendship and the fumes of wine, Jonas grew talkative.

It does not follow in the case of such a person that the more talkative he becomes, the more agreeable he is; on the contrary, his merits show to most advantage, perhaps, in silence. Having no means, as he thought, of putting himself on an equality with the rest, but by the assertion of that depth and sharpness on which he had been complimented, Jonas exhibited that faculty to the utmost; and was so deep and so sharp that he lost himself in his own profundity, and cut his fingers with his own edge-tools.

It was especially in his way and character to exhibit his quality at his entertainer's expense; and while he drank of the sparkling wines, and partook of his monstrous profusion, to ridicule the extravagance which had set such costly fare before him. Even at such a wanton board, and in such more than doubtful company, this might have proved a disagreeable experiment, but that Tigg and Crimble, studying to understand their man thoroughly, gave him what license he chose: knowing that the more he took, the better for their purpose. And thus while the blundering cheat—gull that he was, for all his cunning—thought himself rolled up hedge-hog fashion, with his sharpest points towards them, he was, in fact, betraying all his vulnerable parts to their unwinking watchfulness.

Whether the two gentlemen who contributed so much to the Doctor's philosophical knowledge (by the way, the Doctor slipped off quietly, after swallowing his usual amount of wine) had had their cue distinctly from the host, or took it from what they saw and heard, they acted their parts very well. They solicited the honour of Jonas's better acquaintance ; trusted that they would have the pleasure of introducing him into that elevated society in which he was so well qualified to shine ; and informed him, in the most friendly manner, that the advantages of their respective establishments were entirely at his control. In a word, they said "Be one of us!" And Jonas said he was infinitely obliged to them, and he would be : adding within himself, that so long as they "stood treat," there was nothing he would like better.

After coffee, which was served in the drawing-room, there was a short interval (mainly sustained by Pip and Wolf) of conversation ; rather highly spiced and strongly seasoned. When it flagged, Jonas took it up, and showed considerable humour in appraising the furniture ; inquiring whether such an article was paid for ; what it had originally cost ; and the like. In all of this, he was, as he considered, desperately hard on Montague, and very demonstrative of his own brilliant parts.

Some Champagne Punch gave a new though temporary fillip to the entertainments of the evening. For after leading to some noisy proceedings, which were not at all intelligible, it ended in the unsteady departure of the two gentlemen of the world, and the slumber of Mr. Jonas upon one of the sofas.

As he could not be made to understand where he was, Mr. Bailey received orders to call a hackney-coach, and take him home : which that young gentleman roused himself from an uneasy sleep in the hall, to do. It being now almost three o'clock in the morning.

"Is he hooked, do you think?" whispered Crimble, as himself and partner stood in a distant part of the room observing him as he lay.

"Ay!" said Tigg, in the same tone. "With a strong iron, perhaps. Has Nadgett been here to-night?"

"Yes. I went out to him. Hearing you had company, he went away."

"Why did he do that?"

"He said he would come back early in the morning, before you were out of bed."

"Tell them to be sure and send him up to my bedside. Hush ! Here's the boy ! Now Mr. Bailey, take this gentleman home, and see him safely in. Hallo here ! Why Chuzzlewit, halloo ! "

They got him upright with some difficulty, and assisted him down stairs, where they put his hat upon his head, and tumbled him into the coach. Mr. Bailey having shut him in, mounted the box beside the coachman, and smoked his cigar with an air of particular satisfaction ; the undertaking in which he was engaged having a free and sporting character about it, which was quite congenial to his taste.

Arriving in due time at the house in the city, Mr. Bailey jumped down, and expressed the lively nature of his feelings, in a knock : the like of which had probably not been heard in that quarter since the great fire of London. Going out into the road to observe the effect of

this feat, he saw that a dim light, previously visible at an upper window, had been already removed and was travelling down-stairs. To obtain a foreknowledge of the bearer of this taper, Mr. Bailey skipped back to the door again, and put his eye to the keyhole.

It was the merry one herself. But sadly, strangely altered ! So careworn and dejected, so faltering and full of fear ; so fallen, humbled, broken ; that to have seen her, quiet in her coffin, would have been a less surprise.

She set the light upon a bracket in the hall, and laid her hand upon her heart ; upon her eyes ; upon her burning head. Then she came on towards the door, with such a wild and hurried step, that Mr. Bailey lost his self-possession, and still had his eye where the keyhole had been, when she opened it.

“Aha !” said Mr. Bailey, with an effort. “There you are, are you ? What’s the matter ? Ain’t you well, though ?”

In the midst of her astonishment as she recognised him in his altered dress, so much of her old smile came back to her face that Bailey was glad. But next moment he was sorry again, for he saw tears standing in her poor dim eyes.

“Don’t be frightened,” said Bailey. “There ain’t nothing the matter. I’ve brought home Mr. Chuzzlewit. He ain’t ill. He’s only a little swipey you know.” Mr. Bailey reeled in his boots, to express intoxication.

“Have you come from Mrs. Todgers’s ?” asked Merry, trembling.

“Todgers’s, bless you ! No !” cried Mr. Bailey. “I haven’t got nothing to do with Todgers’s. I cut that connexion long ago. He’s been a dining with my governor at the west-end. Didn’t you know he was a comin’ to see us ?”

“No,” she said, faintly.

“Oh yes ! We’re heavy swells too, and so I tell you. Don’t you come out, a catching cold in your head. I’ll wake him !” And Mr. Bailey expressing in his demeanour a perfect confidence that he could carry him in with ease, if necessary, opened the coach-door, let down the steps, and giving Jonas a shake, cried “We’ve got home, my flower ! Tumble up then !”

He was so far recovered as to be able to respond to this appeal, and to come stumbling out of the coach in a heap, to the great hazard of Mr. Bailey’s person. When he got upon the pavement, Mr. Bailey first butted at him in front, and then dexterously propped him up behind ; and having steadied him by these means, he assisted him into the house.

“You go up first with the light,” said Bailey to Mrs. Jonas, “and we’ll foller. Don’t tremble so. He won’t hurt you. When I’ve had a drop too much, I’m full of good natur myself.”

She went on before ; and her husband and Bailey, by dint of tumbling over each other, and knocking themselves about, got at last into the sitting-room above stairs, where Jonas staggered into a seat.

“There !” said Mr. Bailey. “He’s all right now. You ain’t got nothing to cry for, bless you ! He’s righter than a trivet !”

The ill-favoured brute, with dress awry, and sodden face, and rumpled hair, sat blinking and drooping, and rolling his idiotic eyes about, until, becoming conscious by degrees, he recognised his wife, and shook his fist at her.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Bailey, squaring his arms with a sudden emotion. "What, you're wicious, are you? Would you though! You'd better not!"

"Pray, go away!" said Merry. "Bailey, my good boy, go home. Jonas!" she said; timidly laying her hand upon his shoulder, and bending her head down, over him; "Jonas!"

"Look at her!" cried Jonas, pushing her off with his extended arm. "Look here! Look at her! Here's a bargain for a man!"

"Dear Jonas!"

"Dear Devil!" he replied, with a fierce gesture. "You're a pretty clog to be tied to a man for life, you mewling, white-faced cat! Get out of my sight!"

"I know you don't mean it, Jonas. You wouldn't say it if you were sober."

With affected gaiety she gave Bailey a piece of money, and again implored him to be gone. Her entreaty was so earnest, that the boy had not the heart to stay there. But he stopped at the bottom of the stairs, and listened.

"I wouldn't say it if I was sober!" retorted Jonas. "You know better. Have I never said it when I was sober?"

"Often, indeed!" she answered through her tears.

"Hark ye!" cried Jonas, stamping his foot upon the ground. "You made me bear your pretty humours once, and ecod I'll make you bear mine now. I always promised myself I would. I married you that I might. I'll know who's master, and who's slave!"

"Heaven knows I am obedient!" said the sobbing girl. "Much more so than I ever thought to be!"

Jonas laughed in his drunken exultation. "What! you're finding it out, are you! Patience, and you will in time! Griffins have claws, my girl. There's not a pretty slight you ever put upon me, nor a pretty trick you ever played me, nor a pretty insolence you ever showed me, that I won't pay back a hundred-fold. What else did I marry you for. *You, too!*" he said, with coarse contempt.

It might have softened him—indeed it might—to hear her turn a little fragment of a song he used to say he liked; trying, with a heart so full, to win him back.

"Oho!" he said, "you're deaf, are you? You don't hear me, eh? So much the better for you. I hate you. I hate myself, for having been fool enough to strap a pack upon my back for the pleasure of treading on it whenever I choose. Why, things have opened to me, now, so that I might marry almost where I liked. But I wouldn't; I'd keep single. I ought to be single, among the friends *I* know. Instead of that, here I am, tied like a log to you. Pah! Why do you show your pale face when I come home? Am I never to forget you?"

"How late it is!" she said cheerfully: opening the shutter, after an interval of silence. "Broad day, Jonas!"

"Broad day or black night, what do *I* care!" was the kind rejoinder.

"The night passed quickly, too. I don't mind sitting up, at all."

"Sit up for me again, if you dare!" growled Jonas.

"I was reading," she proceeded, "all night long. I began when

you went out, and read till you came home again. The strangest story, Jonas ! And true, the book says. I'll tell it you to-morrow."

"True, was it ?" said Jonas, doggedly.

"So the book says."

"Was there anything in it, about a man's being determined to conquer his wife, break her spirit, bend her temper, crush all her humours like so many nutshells—kill her, for aught I know ?" said Jonas.

"No. Not a word," she answered quickly.

"Ah !" he returned. "That'll be a true story though, before long ; for all the book says nothing about it. It's a lying book, I see. A fit book for a lying reader. But you're deaf. I forgot that."

There was another interval of silence ; and the boy was stealing away, when he heard her footstep on the floor, and stopped. She went up to him, as it seemed, and spoke lovingly : saying that she would defer to him in everything, and would consult his wishes and obey them, and they might be very happy if he would be gentle with her. He answered with an imprecation, and—

Not with a blow ? Yes. Stern truth against the base-souled villain : with a blow.

No angry cries ; no loud reproaches. Even her weeping and her sobs were stifled by her clinging round him. She only said, repeating it in agony of heart, How could he, could he, could he—and lost utterance in tears.

Oh woman, God beloved in old Jerusalem ! The best among us need deal lightly with thy faults, if only for the punishment thy nature will endure, in bearing heavy evidence against us, on the Day of Judgment !

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH SOME PEOPLE ARE PRECOCIOUS, OTHERS PROFESSIONAL, AND OTHERS MYSTERIOUS : ALL IN THEIR SEVERAL WAYS.

It may have been the restless remembrance of what he had seen and heard over-night, or it may have been no deeper mental operation than the discovery that he had nothing to do, which caused Mr. Bailey, on the following afternoon, to feel particularly disposed for agreeable society, and prompted him to pay a visit to his friend Poll Sweedlepipe.

On the little bell giving clamorous notice of a visitor's approach (for Mr. Bailey came in at the door with a lunge, to get as much sound out of the bell as possible), Poll Sweedlepipe desisted from the contemplation of a favourite owl, and gave his young friend hearty welcome.

"Why, you look smarter by day," said Poll, "than you do by candle-light. I never see such a tight young dasher."

"Reether so, Polly. How's our fair friend Sairah ?"

"Oh, she's pretty well," said Poll. "She's at home."

"There's the remains of a fine woman about Sairah, Poll," observed Mr. Bailey, with genteel indifference.

"Oh !" thought Poll, "he's old. He must be very old !"

"Too much crumb, you know," said Mr. Bailey ; "too fat, Poll. But there's many worse at her time of life."

"The very owl's a opening his eyes!" thought Poll. "I don't wonder at it, in a bird of his opinions."

He happened to have been sharpening his razors, which were lying open in a row, while a huge strop dangled from the wall. Glancing at these preparations, Mr. Bailey stroked his chin, and a thought appeared to occur to him.

"Poll," he said, "I ain't as neat as I could wish about the gills. Being here, I may as well have a shave, and get trimmed close."

The barber stood aghast; but Mr. Bailey divested himself of his neckcloth, and sat down in the easy shaving chair with all the dignity and confidence in life. There was no resisting his manner. The evidence of sight and touch became as nothing. His chin was as smooth as a new-laid egg or a scraped Dutch cheese; but Poll Sweedlepipe wouldn't have ventured to deny, on affidavit, that he had the beard of a Jewish rabbi.

"Go with the grain, Poll, all round, please," said Mr. Bailey, screwing up his face for the reception of the lather. "You may do wot you like with the bits of whisker. I don't care for 'em."

The meek little barber stood gazing at him with the brush and soap-dish in his hand, stirring them round and round in a ludicrous uncertainty, as if he were disabled by some fascination from beginning. At last he made a dash at Mr. Bailey's cheek. Then he stopped again, as if the ghost of a beard had suddenly receded from his touch; but receiving mild encouragement from Mr. Bailey, in the form of an adjuration to "Go in and win," he lathered him bountifully. Mr. Bailey smiled through the suds in his satisfaction.

"Gently over the stones, Poll. Go a-tilttoe over the pimples!"

Poll Sweedlepipe obeyed, and scraped the lather off again with particular care. Mr. Bailey squinted at every successive dab, as it was deposited on a cloth on his left shoulder, and seemed, with a microscopic eye, to detect some bristles in it; for he murmured more than once, "Reether redder than I could wish, Poll." The operation being concluded, Paul fell back and stared at him again, while Mr. Bailey, wiping his face on the jack-towel, remarked, "that arter late hours nothing freshened up a man so much as a easy shave."

He was in the act of tying his cravat at the glass, without his coat, and Poll had wiped his razor, ready for the next customer, when Mrs. Gamp, coming down stairs, looked in at the shop-door to give the barber neighbourly good day. Feeling for her unfortunate situation, in having conceived a regard for himself which it was not in the nature of things that he could return, Mr. Bailey hastened to soothe her with words of kindness.

"Hallo!" he said, "Sairah! I needn't ask you how you've been this long time, for you're in full bloom. All a blowin' and a growin'; ain't she, Polly?"

"Why, drat the Bragian boldness of that boy!" cried Mrs. Gamp, though not displeased. "What a imperent young sparrow it is! I wouldn't be that creetur's mother not for fifty pound!"

Mr. Bailey regarded this as a delicate confession of her attachment, and a hint that no pecuniary gain could recompense her for its being

rendered hopeless. He felt flattered. Disinterested affection is always flattering.

"Ah, dear!" moaned Mrs. Gamp, sinking into the shaving chair, "That there blessed Bull, Mr. Sweedlepipe, has done his very best to conker me. Of all the trying invalieges in this wally of the shadder, that one beats 'em black and blue."

It was the practice of Mrs. Gamp and her friends in the profession, to say this of all the easy customers; as having at once the effect of discouraging competitors for office, and accounting for the necessity of high living on the part of the nurses.

"Talk of constitooshun!" Mrs. Gamp observed. "A person's constitooshun need be made of Bricks to stand it. Mrs. Harris jestly says to me, but t'other day, 'Oh! Sairey Gamp,' she says, 'how is it done?' 'Mrs. Harris, ma'am,' I says to her, 'we gives no trust ourselves, and puts a deal o' trust elsevere; these is our religious feelins, and we finds 'em answer.' 'Sairey,' says Mrs. Harris, 'sech is life. Vich likeways is the hend of all things!'"

The barber gave a soft murmur, as much as to say that Mrs. Harris's remark, though perhaps not quite so intelligible as could be desired from such an authority, did equal honour to her head and to her heart.

"And here," continued Mrs. Gamp, "and here am I a goin twenty mile in distant, on as wintersome a chance as ever any one as monthlied ever run, I do believe. Says Mrs. Harris, with a woman's and a mother's art a beatin in her human breast, says she to me, 'You're not a goin, Sairey, Lord forgive you!' 'Why am I not a going, Mrs. Harris?' I replies. 'Mrs. Gill,' I says, 'wos never wrong with six; and is it likely, ma'am—I ast you as a mother—that she will begin to be unreg'lar now. Often and often have I heerd him say,' I says to Mrs. Harris, 'meaning Mr. Gill, that he would back his wife agen Moore's almanack, to name the very day and hour, for ninepence farden. Is it likely, ma'am,' I says, 'as she will fail this once?' Says Mrs. Harris, 'No, ma'am, not in the course of nater. But,' she says, the tears a fillin in her eyes, 'you knows much betterer than me, with your experienga, how little puts us out. A Punch's show,' she says, 'a chimbley sweep, a newfunlandog, or a drunkin man, a comin round the corner sharp, may do it.' So it may, Mr. Sweedlepipes," said Mrs. Gamp, "there's no deniging of it; and though my books is clear for full a week, I takes a anxious art along with me, I do assure you, sir."

"You're so full of zeal, you see!" said Poll. "You worrit yourself so."

"Worrit myself!" cried Mrs. Gamp, raising her hands and turning up her eyes. "You speak the truth in that, sir, if you never speaks no more, 'twixt this and when two Sundays jines together. I feels the sufferins of other people more than I feels my own, though no one mayn't suppose it. The families I've had," said Mrs. Gamp, "if all wos knowd, and credit done where credit's doo, would take a week to chris'en at Saint Polge's fontin!"

"Where's the patient going?" asked Sweedlepipe.

"Into Har'fordshire, which is his native air. But native airs nor native graces neither," Mrs. Gamp observed, "won't bring *him* round."

"So bad as that?" inquired the wistful barber. "Indeed!"

Mrs. Gamp shook her head mysteriously, and pursed up her lips. "There's fevers of the mind," she said, "as well as body. You may take your slime drafts till you flies into the air with efferwescence ; but you won't cure that."

"Ah !" said the barber, opening his eyes, and putting on his raven aspect, "Lor !"

"No. You may make yourself as light as any gash balloon," said Mrs. Gamp. "But talk, when you're wrong in your head and when you're in your sleep, of certain things ; and you'll be heavy in your mind."

"Of what kind of things now ?" inquired Poll, greedily biting his nails in his great interest. "Ghosts ?"

Mrs. Gamp, who perhaps had been already tempted further than she had intended to go, by the barber's stimulating curiosity, gave a sniff of uncommon significance, and said, it didn't matter.

"I'm a going down with my patient in the coach this arternoon," she proceeded. "I'm a going to stop with him a day or so, till he gets a country nuss (drat them country nusses, much the orkard hussies knows about their bis'ness) ; and then I'm a comin' back ; and that's my trouble, Mr. Sweedlepipes. But I hope that everythink 'll only go on right and comfortable as long as I'm away ; perwisin which, as Mrs. Harris says, Mrs. Gill is welcome to choose her own time : all times of the day and night bein' equally the same to me."

During the progress of the foregoing remarks, which Mrs. Gamp had addressed exclusively to the Barber, Mr. Bailey had been tying his cravat, getting on his coat, and making hideous faces at himself in the glass. Being now personally addressed by Mrs. Gamp, he turned round, and mingled in the conversation.

"You ain't been in the city, I suppose, sir, since we was all three there together," said Mrs. Gamp, "at Mr. Chuzzlewit's ?"

"Yes I have, Sairah. I was there, last night."

"Last night !" cried the Barber.

"Yes, Poll, reether so. You can call it this morning if you like to be particular. He dined with us."

"Who does that young Limb mean by 'hus ?'" said Mrs. Gamp, with most impatient emphasis.

"Me and my Governor, Sairah. He dined at our house. We wos very merry, Sairah. So much so, that I was obliged to see him home in a hackney coach at three o'clock in the morning." It was on the tip of the boy's tongue to relate what had followed ; but remembering how easily it might be carried to his master's ears, and the repeated cautions he had had from Mr. Crimble "not to chatter," he checked himself : adding only, "She was sitting up, expecting him."

"And all things considered," said Mrs. Gamp sharply, "she might have know'd better than to go a tiring herself out, by doin' anythink of the sort. Did they seem pretty pleasant together, sir ?"

"Oh, yes," answered Bailey, "pleasant enough."

"I'm glad on it," said Mrs. Gamp, with a second sniff of significance.

"They haven't been married so long," observed Poll, rubbing his hands, "that they need be anything but pleasant yet awhile."

"No," said Mrs. Gamp, with a third significant signal.

"Especially," pursued the Barber, "when the gentleman bears such a character as you gave him."

"I speak as I find, Mr. Sweedlepipes," said Mrs. Gamp. "Forbid it should be otherways! But we never knows wot's hidden in each others hearts; and if we had glass winders there, we'd need to keep the shutters up, some on us, I do assure you!"

"But you don't mean to say"—Poll Sweedlepipe began.

"No," said Mrs. Gamp, cutting him very short, "I don't. Don't think I do. The torters of the Imposition shouldn't make me own I did. All I says is," added the good woman rising and folding her shawl about her, "that the Bull's a waitin, and the precious moments is a flyin' fast."

The little barber having in his eager curiosity a great desire to see Mrs. Gamp's patient, proposed to Mr. Bailey that they should accompany her to the Bull, and witness the departure of the coach. That young gentleman assenting, they all went out together.

Arriving at the tavern, Mrs. Gamp (who was full-dressed for the journey, in her latest suit of mourning) left her friends to entertain themselves in the yard, while she ascended to the sick room, where her fellow-labourer Mrs. Prig was dressing the invalid.

He was so wasted, that it seemed as if his bones would rattle when they moved him. His cheeks were sunken, and his eyes unnaturally large. He lay back in the easy chair like one more dead than living; and rolled his languid eyes towards the door when Mrs. Gamp appeared, as painfully as if their weight alone were burdensome to move.

"And how are we by this time?" Mrs. Gamp observed. "We looks charming."

"We looks a deal charminger than we are, then," returned Mrs. Prig, a little chafed in her temper. "We got out of bed back'ards, I think, for we're as cross as two sticks. I never see sich a man. He wouldn't have been washed, if he'd had his own way."

"She put the soap in my mouth," said the unfortunate patient, feebly.

"Couldn't you keep it shut then?" retorted Mrs. Prig. "Who do you think's to wash one feater, and miss another, and wear one's eyes out with all manner of fine-work of that description, for half-a-crown a day? If you wants to be tittivated, you must pay accordin."

"Oh dear me!" cried the patient, "oh dear, dear!"

"There!" said Mrs. Prig, "that's the way he's been a conducting of himself, Sarah, ever since I got him out of bed, if you'll believe it."

"Instead of being grateful," Mrs. Gamp observed, "for all our little ways. Oh, fie for shame, sir, fie for shame!"

Here Mrs. Prig seized the patient by the chin, and began to rasp his unhappy head with a hair-brush.

"I suppose you don't like that, neither!" she observed, stopping to look at him.

It was just possible that he didn't, for the brush was a specimen of the hardest kind of instrument producible by modern art; and his very eye-lids were red with the friction. Mrs. Prig was gratified to observe

the correctness of her supposition, and said triumphantly, "she know'd as much."

When his hair was smoothed down comfortably into his eyes, Mrs. Prig and Mrs. Gamp put on his neckerchief: adjusting his shirt-collar with great nicety, so that the starched points should also invade those organs, and afflict them with an artificial ophthalmia. His waistcoat and coat were next arranged: and as every button was wrenched into a wrong button-hole, and the order of his boots was reversed, he presented on the whole rather a melancholy appearance.

"I don't think it's right," said the poor weak invalid. "I feel as if I was in somebody else's clothes. I'm all on one side; and you've made one of my legs shorter than the other. There's a bottle in my pocket too. What do you make me sit upon a bottle for?"

"Deuce take the man!" cried Mrs. Gamp, drawing it forth. "If he ain't been and got my night-bottle here. I made a little cupboard of his coat when it hung behind the door, and quite forgot it, Betsey. You'll find a ingun or two, and a little tea and sugar in his t'other pocket, my dear, if you'll jest be good enough to take 'em out."

Betsey produced the property in question, together with some other articles of general chandlery; and Mrs. Gamp transferred them to her own pocket, which was a species of nankeen pannier. Refreshment then arrived in the form of chops and strong ale, for the ladies, and a basin of beef-tea for the patient: which refection was barely at an end when John Westlock appeared.

"Up and dressed!" cried John, sitting down beside him. "That's brave. How do you feel?"

"Much better. But very weak."

"No wonder. You have had a hard bout of it. But country air, and change of scene," said John, "will make another man of you! Why, Mrs. Gamp," he added, laughing, as he kindly arranged the sick man's garments, "you have odd notions of a gentleman's dress!"

"Mr. Leewsome an't a easy gent to get into his clothes, sir," Mrs. Gamp replied with dignity; "as me and Betsey Prig can certify afore the Lord Mayor and Uncommon Counsellors, if needful!"

John was at that moment standing close in front of the sick man, in the act of releasing him from the torture of the collars before mentioned, when he said in a whisper:

"Mr. Westlock! I don't wish to be overheard. I have something very particular and strange to say to you; something that has been a dreadful weight on my mind, through this long illness."

Quick in all his motions, John was turning round to desire the women to leave the room: when the sick man held him by the sleeve.

"Not now. I've not the strength. I've not the courage. May I tell it when I have? May I write it, if I find that easier and better?"

"May you!" cried John. "Why, Leewsome, what is this!"

"Don't ask me what it is. It's unnatural and cruel. Frightful to think of. Frightful to tell. Frightful to know. Frightful to have helped in. Let me kiss your hand for all your goodness to me. Be kinder still, and don't ask me what it is!"

At first, John gazed at him, in great surprise; but remembering how

very much reduced he was, and how recently his brain had been on fire with fever, believed that he was labouring under some imaginary horror, or despondent fancy. For farther information on this point, he took an opportunity of drawing Mrs. Gamp aside, while Betsey Prig was wrapping him in cloaks and shawls, and asked her whether he was quite collected in his mind.

"Oh bless you, no!" said Mrs. Gamp. "He hates his nusses to this hour. They always does it, sir. It's a certain sign. If you could have heerd the poor dear soul a findin' fault with me and Betsey Prig, not half an hour ago, you would have wondered how it is we don't get fretted to the tomb."

This almost confirmed John in his suspicion; so, not taking what had passed into any serious account, he resumed his former cheerful manner and assisted by Mrs. Gamp and Betsey Prig, conducted Leewsome downstairs to the coach: just then upon the point of starting.

Poll Sweedlepipe was at the door with his arms tight folded and his eyes wide open, and looked on with absorbing interest, while the sick man was slowly moved into the vehicle. His bony hands and haggard face impressed Poll wonderfully; and he informed Mr. Bailey, in confidence, that he wouldn't have missed seeing him for a pound. Mr. Bailey who was of a different constitution, remarked, that he would have staid away for five shillings.

It was a troublesome matter to adjust Mrs. Gamp's luggage to her satisfaction; for every package belonging to that lady had the inconvenient property of requiring to be put in a boot by itself, and to have no other luggage near it, on pain of actions at law for heavy damages against the proprietors of the coach. The umbrella with the circular patch was particularly hard to be got rid of, and several times thrust out its battered brass nozzle from improper crevices and chinks, to the great terror of the other passengers. Indeed, in her intense anxiety to find a haven of refuge for this chattel, Mrs. Gamp so often moved it, in the course of five minutes, that it seemed not one umbrella but fifty. At length it was lost, or said to be; and for the next five minutes she was face to face with the coachman, go wherever he might, protesting that it should be "made good," though she took the question to the House of Commons.

At last, her bundle, and her pattens, and her basket, and everything else, being disposed of, she took a friendly leave of Poll and Mr. Bailey, dropped a curtsey to John Westlock, and parted as from a cherished member of the sisterhood with Betsey Prig.

"Wishin' you lots of sickness, my darling creetur," Mrs. Gamp observed, "and good places. It won't be long, I hope, afore we works together, off and on, again, Betsey; and may our next meetin' be at a large family's, where they all takes it reg'lar, one from another, turn and turn about, and has it business-like."

"I don't care how soon it is," said Mrs. Prig; "nor how many weeks it lasts."

Mrs. Gamp with a reply in a congenial spirit was backing to the coach, when she came in contact with a lady and gentleman who were passing along the footway.

"Take care, take care here!" cried the gentleman. "Halloo! My dear! Why, it's Mrs. Gamp!"

"What, Mr. Mould!" exclaimed the nurse. "And Mrs. Mould! who would have thought as we should ever have a meetin' here, I'm sure!"

"Going out of town, Mrs. Gamp?" cried Mould. "That's unusual, isn't it?"

"It *is* unusual, sir," said Mrs. Gamp. "But only for a day or two at most. The gent," she whispered, "as I spoke about."

"What, in the coach!" cried Mould. "The one you thought of recommending? Very odd. My dear, this will interest you. The gentleman that Mrs. Gamp thought likely to suit us, is in the coach, my love."

Mrs. Mould was greatly interested.

"Here, my dear. You can stand upon the door-step," said Mould, "and take a look at him. Ha! There he is. Where's my glass? Oh! all right, I've got it. Do you see him, my dear?"

"Quite plain," said Mrs. Mould.

"Upon my life you know, this is a very singular circumstance," said Mould, quite delighted. "This is the sort of thing, my dear, I wouldn't have missed on any account. It tickles one. It's interesting. It's almost a little play, you know. Ah! There he is! To be sure. Look's poorly, Mrs. M., don't he?"

Mrs. Mould assented.

"He's coming our way, perhaps, after all," said Mould. "Who knows! I feel as if I ought to show him some little attention, really. He don't seem a stranger to me. I'm very much inclined to move my hat, my dear."

"He's looking hard this way," said Mrs. Mould.

"Then I will!" cried Mould. "How d'ye do, sir? I wish you good day. Ha! He bows too. Very gentlemanly. Mrs. Gamp has the cards in her pocket, I have no doubt. This is very singular, my dear—and very pleasant. I am not superstitious, but it really seems as if one was destined to pay him those little melancholy civilities which belong to our peculiar line of business. There can be no kind of objection to your kissing your hand to him, my dear."

Mrs. Mould did so.

"Ha!" said Mould. "He's evidently gratified. Poor fellow! I'm quite glad you did it, my love. Bye bye, Mrs. Gamp!" waving his hand. "There he goes; there he goes!"

So he did; for the coach rolled off as the words were spoken. Mr. and Mrs. Mould, in high good humour, went their merry way. Mr. Bailey retired with Poll Sweedlepipe as soon as possible; but some little time elapsed before he could remove his friend from the ground, owing to the impression wrought upon the barber's nerves by Mrs. Prig, whom he pronounced, in admiration of her beard, to be a woman of transcendent charms.

When the light cloud of bustle hanging round the coach was thus dispersed, Nadgett was seen in the darkest box of the Bull coffee-room, looking wistfully up at the clock—as if the man who never appeared, were a little behind his time.

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



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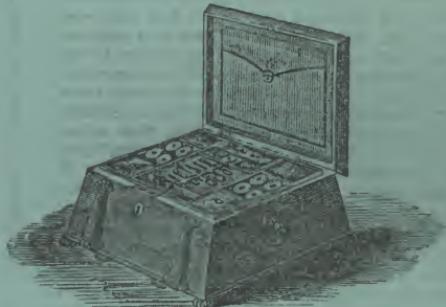
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